

INFORMATION ABOUT:

Rockhounding on Public Lands



U.S. Department of the Interior

Bureau of Land Management

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WHERE IS COLLECTION PERMISSIBLE?

Rockhounding is recognized as a legitimate recreational pursuit on nearly all of the 17.8 million acres of public land in Wyoming. These public lands administered by the BLM are open to anyone, to take limited amounts of rock material for noncommercial purposes without charge. Exceptions - land withdrawn and protected for other purposes - are posted. Maps showing the location of public lands in Wyoming can be obtained from this office or the field offices (noted on WYNF-0007, BLM Offices in Wyoming).

NO HISTORIC ARTIFACTS, PLEASE

The Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979 and the Antiquities Act of 1906 are designed to protect our Nation's cultural resources. These laws prohibit the unauthorized excavation, removal, damage, or alteration of any archaeological and historical site or object. Petroglyphs, human graves, old dwellings, pottery, stone tools, arrowheads, and other remains of Indians and early inhabitants are protected by law because they may provide important links to our past.

HOW ABOUT FOSSILS?

Fossil collecting has its own set of rules. Please see BLM/WY/GI-00/004+1050 P-406 (Fossil's on America's Public Lands).

PERMITS?

The BLM does grant permits to qualified individuals and institutions to conduct scientific research at archaeological, historical, and paleontological sites. These permits are issued and administered by the BLM Wyoming State Office in Cheyenne.

REPORTING ARCHAEOLOGICAL OR FOSSIL SITES

All archaeological or paleontological sites - such as prehistoric campsites, buffalo jumps, and fossils of many kinds - may be of scientific interest. They should be reported to the nearest BLM field office (noted on WYNF-0007, BLM Offices in Wyoming) so that they can be evaluated by archaeologists or paleontologists.

MAY PETRIFIED WOOD BE COLLECTED?

Hobby collection has special rules. Please see BLM/WY/GI-00/004+1050 P-406 (Fossil's on America's Public Lands).

A material site contract must be obtained from a BLM office for collection of more than 250 pounds a year, or for commercial use.

COLLECTED BUT NOT DESTROYED . . .

Explosives or power equipment must not be used in excavating or removing petrified wood. Also, collecting may be restricted or prohibited in some areas to allow dedication of the land for another purpose. Such withdrawals follow official notice in the Federal Register and the areas are posted.

HOW ABOUT GEMSTONES?

The private collector is welcome to take specimens of gemstones as well as common rock from public lands. However, a permit must be obtained from the BLM field office if the gemstones are to be taken in large quantities or for resale.

“LOCATING” GEMSTONES

Claims may be “located” for gemstones under the general mining laws, provided they can be mined commercially at a profit. Rockhounding for gemstone specimens on public land remains an accepted recreational use of the public land, however...

DON'T BE A “CLAIM JUMPER”

Care must be taken not to violate the rights of a mining claimant. Patented claims are private land and permission to collect specimens on them must be obtained from the property owner. Unpatented claims, however, are still public lands and rock hounds may pursue their hobby on such lands as long as they do not interfere with mining activities or collect minerals or gemstones for which the claim is “located”. In other words, if an unpatented claim is located because the miner feels he can extract jade at a commercial profit, rockhounders can look for and collect anything but jade. In this case, the claimant has prior rights to the jade and it is, for all practical purposes, his private property.

A claim owner may not legally charge fees for recreational use of unpatented claims.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, TRY . . .

For specific information on the distribution of minerals and rocks in Wyoming, we suggest requesting a publication catalog from: Wyoming Geological Survey, P.O. Box 3008, University Station, Laramie, Wyoming 82071. Of particular interest is Survey Bulletin 66, “Minerals and Rocks of Wyoming,” by W. Dan Hausel, \$6, a summary of rock and mineral distribution in the state.